

Message Text

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

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SUBJ: PRC PROPOSALS IN VIETNAM TALKS DROP REPATRIATION

1. SUMMARY. IN THE THIRD ROUND OF THE SINO-VIETNAMESE TALKS AUGUST 19, THE PRC DELEGATE TABLED A FOUR-POINT PROPOSAL WHICH CALLED FOR BETTER TREATMENT OF VIETNAM'S CHINESE RESIDENTS AND PERMISSION FOR SOME REFUGEES AND WOULD-BE REFUGEES TO RETURN TO THEIR HOMES. THE PROPOSAL'S LACK OF ANY MENTION OF FURTHER REPATRIATION TO CHINA INDICATES THAT THE CHINESE HAVE NO WISH TO PURSUE THIS OPTION FURTHER. THEY ARE NOW LIKELY TO FOCUS THE DEBATE ON HANOI'S TREATMENT OF ITS CHINESE MINORITY IN ORDER TO KEEP UP PRESSURE ON THE SRV. END SUMMARY.

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2. CHINESE NEGOTIATOR CHUNG HIS-TUNG'S FOUR POINT PROPOSAL DURING THE THIRD ROUND AUGUST 19 OF THE SINO-VIETNAMESE TALKS IS STRIKING FOR THE TOTAL ABSENCE OF ANY HINT OF FURTHER REPATRIATION. CHUNG ASKED FOR AN END TO DISCRIMINATION OF CHINESE RESIDENTS, AN END TO FORCED NATURALIZATION, AND VIETNAMESE ACCEPTANCE OF REFUGEES STRANDED AT THE BORDER AS WELL AS

SOME WHO HAVE ALREADY REACHED THE PRC.

3. CHINA'S THEME IN ITS PROPAGANDA WAR WITH THE SRV HAS OF COURSE ALL ALONG BEEN THAT HANOI SHOULD STOP MISTREATING ITS ETHNIC CHINESE. WITH THE DISPATCH OF THE TWO REPATRIATION SHIPS IN JUNE, HOWEVER, THE FOCUS SHIFTED TO HANOI'S ALLEGED OBSTRUCTION OF CHINESE EFFORTS TO REPATRIATE ITS PERSECUTED NATIONALS. IT HAS BEEN EVIDENT FOR SOME TIME, HOWEVER, THAT PEKING WAS UNENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT A MASSIVE INFLUX OF OVERSEAS CHINESE, AND IT HAS SINCE TAKEN STEPS, FIRST ON JULY 12 WITH THE PARTIAL CLOSING OF THE LAND BORDER, FOLLOWED BY THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE REPATRIATION SHIPS, TO PUT A HALT TO THIS FLOW.

4. ONE OF THE MAJOR TOPICS OF THE VICE MINISTERIAL TALKS APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN THE PLIGHT OF THE SEVERAL THOUSAND REFUGEES WHO HAVE GATHERED AT THE SINO-VIETNAMESE BORDER, UNABLE TO REACH THE PRC BECAUSE OF LACK OF PROPER DOCUMENTATION AND EITHER AFRAID OR UNABLE TO RETURN TO THEIR HOMES IN VIETNAM. DURING THE SECOND ROUND OF TALKS ON AUGUST 15, CHUNG HSI-TUNG DEMANDED THAT HANOI ALLOW THEM TO GO HOME AND "PROTECT THEIR PROPER RIGHTS AND INTERESTS, INCLUDING THEIR RIGHT TO LIVELIHOOD". VIETNAMESE VICE FOREIGN MINISTER HOANG BICH SON LATER MADE THIS APPEAR TO BE CONFIDENTIAL

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CHINESE ACQUIESCENCE TO A VIETNAMESE DEMAND, AND CHUNG ON AUGUST 18 FELT CONSTRAINED TO MAKE A STATEMENT TO SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT. IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT THE CHINESE DEMAND IS NOT SOLELY FOR PERMISSION FOR THE REFUGEES TO RETURN TO THEIR HOMES, BUT ALSO SOME FORM OF GUARANTEE FOR THEIR SUBSEQUENT TREATMENT.

5. IN CONTRAST TO THE PRC POSITION ON THE REFUGEES STRANDED AT THE BORDER, CHUNG'S AUGUST 19 DEMAND THAT VIETNAM ACCEPT BACK SOME OF THE 160,000 REFUGEES WHO HAVE REACHED CHINA IS A NEW DEPARTURE. CHUNG NOT ONLY ASKED FOR THE RETURN OF SOME VIETNAMESE CITIZENS WHO HAD JOINED THE FLOW ACROSS THE BORDER, BUT STATED THAT SOME "CHINESE NATIONALS" HAD BECOME SEPARATED FROM THEIR FAMILIES AND NOW ALSO WISHED TO RETURN TO THEIR ORIGINAL HOMES. THIS IS BOTH A TACIT ADMISSION THAT SOME REFUGEES REACHED THE PRC WITH FALSE EXPECTATIONS AND AN INDICATION THAT CHINA WILL BE VERY RELUCTANT TO OPEN ITS DOORS ANY FURTHER.

6. CHINA'S RENEWED ATTENTION TO THE TREATMENT OF ETHNIC CHINESE IN VIETNAM, AS OPPOSED TO THEIR RIGHT

TO BE REPATRIATED, IS ACCOMPANIED BY A SUBTLE SHIFT IN ITS VIEWS OF THE RIGHTS OF THE CHINESE RESIDENTS. IN CHUNG'S PRESENTATION AT THE FIRST ROUND OF TALKS AUGUST 8, FOR INSTANCE, HE STATED THAT UNDER THE 1955 AGREEMENT CHINESE NATIONALS WERE TO ENJOY EQUAL RIGHTS AND BE SUBJECT TO EQUAL DUTIES WITH THEIR VIETNAMESE NEIGHBORS. IN THE AUGUST 19 TALKS, HOWEVER, HE ASKED ONLY THAT HANOI GUARANTEE THEIR "PROPER RIGHTS AND INTERESTS" -- A VAGUE FORMULATION EQUIVALENT TO PEKING'S GLOBAL POLICY ON OVERSEAS CHINESE, REITERATED LAST MONTH IN A JULY 3 PEOPLE'S DAILY EDITORIAL, THAT CHINESE NATIONALS WHO DECLINE TO TAKE OUT HOST COUNTRY CITIZENSHIP SHOULD BE GUARANTEED THEIR "ELGITIMATE RIGHTS AND INTERESTS."

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7. CHUNG'S FOUR POINTS WEERE ALSO NOTABLE FOR THEIR POINTED OMISSION OF THE QUESTION OF SOUTH VIETNAM'S CHINESE POPULATION. CHUNG STATED ONLY THAT HE WOULD LEAVE THIS QUESTION FORANOTHER OCCASION. WITH PEKING HAVING EVIDENTLY ECIDED AGAINST THE FURTHER REPATRIATION OF ETHNIC CHINESE, IT HAS PROBABLY CONCLUDED THAT IT NEEDS MORE TIME TO COME UP WITH A FORMULA ON CHOLON'S BUSINESSMEN WHICH WILL PRESERVE THE APPEARANCE OF PRC CONCERN FOR OVERSEAS BRETHREN WHILE AVOIDING CHARGES THAT IT IS TRYING TO SABOTAGE THE SRV'S "SOCIALIST TRANSFORMATION".

8. THE SHIFT IN THE FOCUS OF THE DEBATE DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN THAT PEKING HAS SUDDENLY DECIDED TO SEEK A "REASONABLE" SETTLEMENT OF THE DISPUTE, MANY DIPLOMATS IN PEKING FEEL THAT THE RIFT IS TOO DEEP FOR THAT. THEY BELIEVE THAT THE CHINESE LEADERSHIP VIEWS THE HANOI TALKS AAS A PUBLIC FORUM WHICH CAN BE USED TO KEEP PRESSURE ON THE VIETNAMESE, PERHAPS TO INHIBIT THEM IN THEIR POLICY TOWARD KAMPUCHEA. IN PARTIAL CONFIRMATION OF THIS, A FRIENDLY ASIAN DIPLOMAT HAS BEEN TOLD RECENTLY BY BOTH TH VIETNAMESE AMBASSADOR AND BY MFA ASIAN AFFAIRS DEPUTY DIRECTOR LIANG FENG THAT THERE IS VIRTUALLY NO PROSPECT THAT THE TALKS WILL LEAD TO A SOLUTION OF THE DISPUTE.

9. CONCENTRATION ON THE RIGHTS OF ETHNIC CHINESE IN VIETNAM, AS OPPOSED TO THEIR RIGHT TO REFUGE IN CHINA, PUTS PEKING IN A LESS AMBIGUOUS POSITION WHICH AVOIDS THE RISK OF AN INFLUX OF INDIGESTIBLE
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NUMBERS OF OVERSEAS CHINESE. AT THE SAME TIME, BY
PRESSING THE SRV FOR GUARANTEES ON ITS TREATMENT
OF THE CHINESE MINORITY, THE PRC VIRTUALLY ENSURE THAT
THE ISSUE WILL CONTINUE TO BE A SORE POINT IN SINO-
VIETNAMESE RELATIONS. THOMAS

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